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7 July 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT: Comments on Mr. Komer's Report to the President on his
23-29 June Trip to Vietnam**

1. Mr. Komer returns from Vietnam a cautious optimist. He feels the military side of the war is going fairly well but the civil/pacification side is not keeping pace with our military effort. In no small measure this is due to the fact that neither the GVN nor the ARVN is pulling its weight. His principal conclusions are that the U.S. must step up its own support of pacification and rural development and must galvanize its Vietnamese allies into greater and better effort. Mr. Komer offers a number of detailed recommendations for achieving this goal.

2. Though we should respect the request that circulation of this memorandum be restricted, its only really sensitive elements are its adverse comments on the performance of our allies. We recommend that copies be furnished on an EYES ONLY basis to the DDP, Chief/FE, Chief/FE/VNC, the Acting DDI, D/NE, D/CI, and SAVA.

3. Mr. Komer makes a number of perceptive and valid comments on a variety of subjects: the need for better manpower allocation and a more rational definition of the roles and missions of various counterinsurgency elements, the Chieu Hoi program, area priorities, the economic scene, economic warfare, and the desirability of MACV's taking over the Saigon port. He also has some useful things to say about land reform, though like most observers he misses the point that credit, not tenure, is the principal problem.

4. Within the bosom of the family, however, this memorandum -- or rather the analysis and perspective it reflects -- has some serious flaws and raises some basic problems.

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is important is its tone of activist omniscience which masks some fundamental misconceptions about the nature of the war in Vietnam. Perhaps unconsciously, Mr. Komer is encouraging the President to anticipate early and quantifiably measurable results. Even with a proper mix of programs and personnel, such results are not going to occur in a short time span. If we expect such results, we may be misled into constantly re-jiggering valid approaches before they have had enough time to accomplish anything worthwhile. Mr. Komer perceives this unpalatable truth dimly ("... the US/GVN effort is greater and more efficient than ever before -- though one keeps wondering why it takes so long."), but he does not understand it.

5. The most serious defect in the memorandum arises from its misconception of the nature of pacification, which prompts action recommendations we feel would be counterproductive. Mr. Komer notes:

"until we can get rolling on pacification in its widest sense -- securing the villages, flushing out the local VC (not just the main forces) and giving the peasant both security and hope for a better future -- we cannot secure victory".

Had he stopped right there he would have been on solid ground and his memorandum would have been most useful. He does not stop there. He goes on to argue that improvement in the pacification effort is "essentially a matter of better management of US/GVN resources, and of generating enough resources to meet the need". Management and resources are both important, but the essential aspect of pacification is one of doctrine. Without the proper doctrine, management and resources can accomplish little.

6. Mr. Komer makes a number of concrete recommendations for improving the management of the pacification effort, particularly the Rural Development cadre program. Their net effect would be to give this program a military cast which would ruin its chances of success. For example, he recommends that Ambassador Porter have a considerably augmented staff and that a U.S. General Officer be assigned to it as Number 3 man in charge of all field operations -- i.e., the Rural Development teams. He also suggests that because "CIA is simply spread too thin to do the entire job; nor is AID much better", MACV District Advisory teams should be tasked to "keep an eye on" all RD cadre in the field. Should both of these recommendations be accepted, the rural development program that this Agency created would cease to exist and would be replaced by, essentially, a new form of Popular Forces.

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7. The opinions outlined above are private ones offered for your eyes only. They have been discussed with Mr. de Silva who is in substantial agreement and would like to pursue this matter with you further. We recommend that the Agency acknowledge receipt of Mr. Komer's memorandum with a bland and courteous response and not use his report as the vehicle for taking issue with his approach. Nevertheless, we should also prepare an additional paper, not so closely keyed to his trip report as to be provocative, to set forth this Agency's considered views on these larger questions.

8. At some point soon, fundamental decisions will have to be made on the shape and future scope of the RD cadre program, how it is to be managed on the U.S. side, and how it is to be funded. The three questions are so closely interrelated that they will have to be answered collectively rather than seriatim. The Agency's written and verbal input to this decision-making process would be the most appropriate vehicle for presenting our arguments on the fundamental questions raised in Mr. Komer's report.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Vietnamese Affairs Staff

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1 - Komer RD File
1 - GACChrono ✓
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